

# RTV 3593 Multimedia Sports Reporting

## Fall Semester 2018

**Instructor: Dr. John W. Wright**  
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**Wednesdays – Periods 9-10**  
**4:05-6:00 PM**  
**Section 048H-Weimer 1092**  
**Office Hours: Wed 1-3 PM**  
**Tue 4:30-6 PM & by appt.**

### **Overview and Objectives:**

RTV 4930 is designed to offer instruction, analysis and training in sports information gathering and research, writing, interviewing and reporting in a digital era. Special emphasis is placed on improving sports writing skills and reporting judgment and perspectives, research and analysis of sports events and issues, basic sports production, radio reporting assignments and generation of sports content for the Internet. In addition, students receive credit for practical experience in the Innovation News Center and ESPN Gainesville 98.1 (WRUF-AM 850) in the College of Journalism and Communications.

Objectives and goals of the course include:

- (1) to develop skills to effectively research, gather and analyze sports information;
- (2) to develop skills to write high quality stories and features related to sports for on air radio broadcast and posting on the Internet, and to gain ability to effectively record and edit audio obtained via phone or in-person;
- (3) to enhance understanding of the ethics and values of sports journalism;
- (4) to develop ability to understand relative newsworthiness of sports stories;
- (5) to develop ability to write and report “sound and visual stories and features,” with the expectation the work produced can and will be used for WRUF-ESPN 98.1/AM 850, including air and the Internet;
- (6) to develop skills for interviewing athletes, coaches, sports managers and owners;
- (7) to develop understanding of the variety of sports sources used as a reporter;
- (8) to enhance skill in voicing work, live and recorded, on-the-air;
- (9) to enhance understanding of UF, local, high school, national and international sports;
- (10) to learn about websites and other sources for sports research, as well for production of content for the WRUF-ESPN WRUF 98.1 website.

**Course Eligibility:** Students must have received a grade of “C” or better in RTV 2100, MMC 2100 or JOU 3109c.

**Course Fee:** \$110.00

**Required Equipment:** Gathering sound (interviews, media days, teleconferences, etc.) is vital, and students may use many different means to collect sound. Before you will be able to check out digital audio recorders for projects, you must receive operational training both with and without a stick mic, as well as other means of audio collection. The newsroom has recorders for you to use for your projects and the Dept. of Telecommunication has recorders you may check

out (See guidelines for checking out equipment). You may use your smart phone to record audio as long as the quality is consistent and clear.

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance in this class is required and is highly critically. The class meets only once a week, for 16 weeks, 15 total class sessions, and each absence is equivalent to two or three absences in courses that meet twice or three times a week. Excused absences include only approved UF attendance exceptions (see below). In all instances of excused absences, the instructor and student will work out a plan for completing any missed assignments and there will be no grade penalty. This includes absences for religious holidays and participation in official Gator intercollegiate athletic events.

In case of illness, especially including a fever (or any contagious illness), please do not come to class. Please notify the instructor in advance whenever possible, and a physician's note may or may not be required. However, if you are sick and feel contagious the instructor will help you make up the work with no grade penalty.

Multiple unexcused absences will result in a severe grade penalty (at least 7% off final grade per class missed). If you miss either of the quizzes due to an unexcused absence *or lateness* you will not be able to make up the work.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work in this course are consistent with UF policies which can be found in detail the online catalog at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

Students are expected to participate in all class discussions. Do not open notebook computers aside from coordinated class activities, and please turn off cell phones (or at least mute the ringer) prior to class. The instructor may or may not call students out for using laptops and cell phones in class (for any purpose) but there will be a severe negative impact on the class participation grade. Sports reporting is a deadline-based profession, so you are expected to arrive on time for each class.

**Academic Integrity:** UF students are bound by the Honor Pledge, which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code."

On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. For more information visit the Honor Code web page at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/> or contact Student Judicial Affairs, P202 Peabody Hall, 392-1261.

**Students with Disabilities:** Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. The instructor will cooperate fully.

**Course Evaluations:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on a minimum of 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these evaluations are available to students at the above website.

**Course Grading:** Students will be graded in accordance with UF policies for assigning grade points as articulated in the link that follows.

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

### **Course Grading Components**

Coaches and Gator Sports Knowledge Quizzes - 10%

Project One – Critique Only

Project Two - 10%

Project Three - 15%

Project Four - 20%

Participation in Groups and In-Class Writing/Citizenship - 15%

\*Multimedia Property Work - 30%

### **Participation in Groups and Citizenship Evaluations – Total 10 points**

**Preferred (10pts)** – Arrives on time, comments are relevant and reflect understanding and good preparation, clear enthusiasm and positive posture, active participation in group projects. Never engage in non-class related phone or laptop use during class.

**Acceptable (7-9pts)** – Arrives on time, comments are relevant and reflect understanding but maybe not consistently, inconsistent enthusiasm and posture toward class, enthusiastic, typically active in participation on group projects. Never engage in non-class related phone or laptop use during class.

**Needs Improvement (4-6 pts)** – Almost always on time, unexcused absence, comments are minimal, demonstrates barely adequate preparation and little enthusiasm, demeanor is sluggish, not very active in group projects, never engaged in non-class related phone or laptop use during class.

**Unacceptable (1-3 pts)** – Arrives several times after class starts, misses multiple classes, makes very few or no comments, lack of enthusiasm and engagement, disengaged, observed on laptop or phone, mostly quiet with little participation during group projects.

**OOP (Out of the Picture) – (0 points)** – Misses multiple classes, disruptive or rude in class, drawing classmates into distracting behaviors including talking during discussions or lectures, showing texts and web pages irrelevant to class, no interest in group activities. (Note: In my many years at UF, I have never had a student be rude or disrespectful but there must be a bottom of the scale.)

**No Extra Credit at End of Semester**

There will be no opportunity for extra credit to boost grades other than assignments that may be offered to the entire class.

Because there are strict deadlines in sports media, any project turned in late will be penalized at least 50% each day with no exceptions. Projects will be emailed through links or otherwise to the instructors, but a hard copy of written story must be handed in at the beginning of class time. Be prepared to play the audio or video version of your project in class.

<b>Grading Scale:</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>(93-100%)</b>
	<b>A-</b>	<b>(90-92.99%)</b>
	<b>B+</b>	<b>(87-89.99%)</b>
	<b>B</b>	<b>(83-86.99%)</b>
	<b>B-</b>	<b>(80-82.99%)</b>
	<b>C+</b>	<b>(77-79.99%)</b>
	<b>C</b>	<b>(73-76.99%)</b>
	<b>C-</b>	<b>(70-72.99%)</b>
	<b>D+</b>	<b>(67-69.99%)</b>
	<b>D</b>	<b>(63-66.99%)</b>
	<b>D-</b>	<b>(60-62.99%)</b>
	<b>E</b>	<b>(under 60%)</b>

### **Sports Knowledge Quizzes:**

**There will be two quizzes early in the semester**, at the beginning of class. The first quiz will be to make sure that you know the first and last names of all Gator head coaches, since you are working in sports in the INC, writing stories and will be on the air (see below). The second quiz will be on University of Florida sports, including history, administration, and other topics, as well as other specified sports knowledge. You will be given topics to study. Working in sports requires a well-rounded understanding of sports and the quizzes serve as a motivation to learn as much as possible about the field in which you will be working. This also will help you avoid embarrassing errors in the newsroom.

We also will have in class group projects and competitions about various sports topics. Active and enthusiastic participation is an important component of your Participation/Citizenship grade.

### **Station Work:**

Students are required to receive professional training and work experience for a minimum of 3-4 hours each week in the Innovation News Center and ESPN Gainesville 98.1 WRUF studios. This is a critical component of the course and the evaluation of the quality of work during this experience by the sports director will comprise 30% of your final grade. Training may include research, writing sports updates and web stories, control board operations and covering and reporting on events such as press conferences and sports competitions. You should visit the ESPN 98.1 WRUF website now to become very familiar with the style and type of stories covered. <http://www.wruf.com>

Shifts may include evening or weekend hours, and can change, and you may be asked to work during times outside your regular shifts. The weekend and evening shifts should be seen as recognition of your good work. This typically means you have been asked to cover an event

because you have done excellent work at the station. This will provide you with additional valuable experience. Steve Russell, sports director for the multimedia properties, will assign the shifts and provide the primary oversight and evaluations of your work. It is imperative that you arrive on time for shifts and never leave early. If you complete your assigned tasks and do not have another, proactively engage in other sports work to complete your shift.

Introductory training sessions will be held sometime during the second and third weeks of the semester at ESPN Gainesville WRUF 98.1. Attendance is required even for students who have worked previously at one of the College's multimedia properties. Please send the instructor prior notice if you have a sudden emergency or become contagiously ill or otherwise too sick to attend either session.

**Important:** *In lieu of a final exam, you will be working at the station through the end of finals week. Please mark this down on your calendars.*

You must cover your entire shift each time and be on time. If you cannot work, you are responsible for getting someone to cover the shift for you and informing the sports director. This rule is very strictly enforced and the penalty enforced on your station work grade for failure to show up or for being late is severe. Steve Russell is a highly experienced, dedicated and effective mentor, and students find the professional experience aspect of the course to be both enjoyable and invaluable.

There is a professional dress code for the multimedia properties. Students must be prepared at all times to be sent out to press conferences or other events. When you go, you represent the properties, the College and the University of Florida. The requirements include collared shirts. Neutral colors are required for sports journalism students, meaning no orange or blue or UF attire. In addition, athletic wear, hats, sleeveless shirts and flip-flops are not permitted. The dress code will be distributed in class.

### **Class Projects: Details to Come**

**Project One:** A feature story on any athlete or coach. This is a radio story. **Due: Friday Sept. 22 by 9:00 am**

**Project Two:** A game recap of any UF or professional sports game. **Due: Friday Oct. 5 by 9:00 am**

**Project Three:** For Project Three, you will pitch your topic to me. This will be a serious sports story, but can involve almost any widely-recognized sport. You may take any angle. This is a very important assignment (20%) of your final grade, and should build on the critiques and experience from the previous assignments and course discussions and activities. **Due: Friday Nov. 9 at 9:00 am**

**Final Project:** Write a season advance on any professional sports team including photos/video, text and wrap. The story will focus on expectations for the upcoming season. **Due: Dec 28 at class time**

All projects will be expected to be of high quality work. Be sure to work ahead to secure a subject and sources for your stories. You should, for example, begin researching and working on Project Four as you complete Project Three.

Make certain all stories are completely clear of fact errors, typos and any possible spelling or grammatical errors. After suggestions for revisions by the instructor or multimedia properties staff members, students will be expected to produce work of sufficiently high quality to post to the ESPN Gainesville 95.3/AM850 website.

On class sessions after projects are due, students will present the project to the class and report on their work and receive feedback from the instructors and classmates.

*Please email a link to the audio/video your story by the deadline, and send a verbatim hard copy of the written portion of the story even if you have to type it out separately.*

**Optional:** You should be in the process of creating your own personal website to showcase your work. Most of you probably are. If you are not, most students prefer the user-friendly option WordPress. If you do not already have a WordPress account (or your own site), you can create one by going to <http://wordpress.com/>. Step-by-step instructions on how to create your site are provided. You can use a host other than WordPress.

A finished site includes any stories you can link to that you did for the ESPN Gainesville 98.1 site, a professional Twitter account to scroll on the site, a LinkedIn account connected to the site, and any photos you took that were not included in a story for the WRUF site. We can talk about this in class. The website is not included in your course grade.

**COURSE SCHEDULE: \*NOTE: The topic schedule subject will change based on guest availabilities and other factors. There will be no change in project due dates.**

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| Week One (Aug 22):   | Intro to class and review of syllabus; introductions, the basics of sports journalism; relationship to other sports communication fields. <b>Group Writing Exercise.</b>  |
| Week Two (Aug 29):   | History and growth of sports journalism; methods of information gathering and research in sports; review of radio writing principles; individual sports writing exercise; <b>Discussion of Project One.</b><br><i>Multimedia property professional training may be this week.</i> |
| Week Three (Sept 5): | <b>Quiz #1 – All UF Coaches;</b> Emphasis on sports writing for the Web; various forms and approaches to sports reporting; effective use of sound bites and quotes; <b>individual sports writing exercises.</b><br>ESPN 98.1 shifts start this week.                              |
| Week Four (Sept 12): | News judgment and sports; ethics and values of high quality sports journalism; types of sports stories.<br><b>Sports writing exercises. Discussion of Project Two.</b>  |

- Week Five (Sept 19): **Quiz #2 – UF and other sports knowledge**; Guest speaker; Reports on projects. **(Project 1 due Friday Sept. 22 at 9:00 am)**  
**Discussion of Project Two**
- Week Six (Sept 26): **Project 1 Presentations, Critiques and Analysis**; Interviewing techniques for athletes, coaches, sports managers and owners; researching sources of information on sports figures.
- Week Seven (Oct 3): Handling press conferences/teleconferences; social media and sports journalism; **writing exercises (Project 2 due Friday Oct. 5 at 9:00 am)**
- Week Eight (Oct 10): **Project Two: Presentations, Critiques and Analysis; Discuss Project Three**
- Week Nine (Oct 17): **Guest Speaker**
- Week Ten (Oct 24): **Project Two: More Presentations and Analysis**  
Ethics case studies and exercises; using media guides
- Week Eleven (Oct 31): Guest Speakers: Sports talk programming vs. sports reporting and the live broadcast  
**Bring to class a sports project completed at ESPN 98.1.**
- Week Twelve (Nov 7): ESPN assessment; working a sports journalism beat; the various sports networks. Guest speaker. **(Project 3 due Friday Nov. 9 at 9:00 am) Take Home Writing Exercise**
- Week Thirteen (Nov 14): **Project Three: Presentations, Critiques and Analysis**
- Week Fourteen (Nov 21): Thanksgiving Holiday
- Week Fifteen (Nov 28): **Final Project Four Due at Beginning of Class Nov. 28: Presentations, Critiques and Analysis**
- Week Sixteen (Dec 5): Complete Final Project Presentations, Critiques and Analysis

**Reminder: Newsroom shifts run through exam week in lieu of final exam.**